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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1994
Agenda item 3 (c)
COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS OF THE 1993 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE COUNCIL

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 9	3
II.	MEASURES APPROVED BY THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE FOR STRENGTHENING FIELD COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES	10 - 43	4
	A. Measures to be taken in advance of complex emergencies	12 - 15	5
	B. Measures to be taken when complex emergencies arise	16 - 36	6

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
	C. Designation/appointment of the Humanitarian Coordinator	37 - 43	11
III.	THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY REVOLVING FUND	44 - 81	13
	A. Functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund	46 - 64	13
	B. Level of resources	65 - 67	16
	C. Emergency funds of operational agencies	68 - 73	16
	D. Conclusions	74 - 81	18
IV.	FUNDING RAPID COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS IN THE FIELD	82 - 85	19
	Recommendation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee	86	20

Annexes

I.	Model letter of understanding	21
II.	Consolidated advances and reimbursements as at 10 October 1994	22
III.	Status of contributions as at 10 October 1994	24
IV.	Analysis of the CERF (diagrams (a) to (d))	26

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report provides the information requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/57 of 14 December 1994 and by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1994/291 of 27 July 1994.

2. In its resolution 48/57 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to agree, as a matter of urgency, on the best means and guidelines to ensure adequate human and financial resources for rapid response coordination, including the provision of resources that could be drawn on by the Emergency Relief Coordinator for establishing special coordination arrangements in the initial stage of an emergency, taking into account the relevant provisions of Assembly resolutions 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and 47/199 of 22 December 1992 and of the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council related to field-level coordination. 1/

3. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided, pending a final decision to be taken by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994, on the basis of the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as on the experience gained, to authorize, in exceptional circumstances, on a time-bound basis and while preserving the revolving nature of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and relevant operational agencies, under the leadership of the Coordinator, to draw from the interest earned by the Revolving Fund to enhance rapid response coordination where insufficient capacity existed at the field level.

4. Also in the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to provide recommendations on other issues related to field coordination, including measures taken for clear allocations of responsibilities at an early stage of an emergency, in particular by entrusting the primary responsibility to the operational agencies, as appropriate, and on standardized procedures for joint emergency needs assessment missions, under the overall leadership and coordination of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

5. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994 the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

6. At its substantive session of 1994, the Council, by its decision 1994/291 of 27 July 1994, inter alia, welcomed with interest and appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, 2/ and noted the useful information provided by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in his introductory statement made before the Council on 13 July 1994. 3/

7. The Council also, while fully recognizing the rich contribution of the report to the numerous aspects leading to the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 48/57, requested that further information be provided, namely:

(a) Information on the problem of rapid response coordination, on which recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee were requested as a matter of urgency in paragraphs 11 and 13 of Assembly resolution 48/57, including further information on the humanitarian assistance coordinators at the country level referred to in paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General, and their relationship to the system of resident coordinators;

(b) Information on the shortcomings in the functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the corrective measures required and the desirability of increasing the resources available to the Fund, provided that consultations were duly conducted to that effect, as called for in Assembly resolution 48/57.

8. The Council decided - given that it was not in a position to take a final decision because of the lack of sufficient information - that the interim solution mentioned in paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 48/57 remained temporarily valid until its consideration by the Assembly at its forty-ninth session, and, noting that the Assembly would also have to consider the recommendations mentioned in paragraphs 11 and 13 of the resolution, following informal consultations to be conducted on those particular questions by the President of the Council upon receipt of the information requested in paragraph (b) (i) of its decision 1994/291, invited the President of the Council to submit his conclusions on the informal consultations to the Assembly.

9. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee held its ninth session in New York on 23 September 1994 and, inter alia, addressed the issues raised in General Assembly resolution 48/57 and Economic and Social Council decision 1994/291. Its recommendations are reflected under the relevant headings in the present report.

II. MEASURES APPROVED BY THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE FOR STRENGTHENING FIELD COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

10. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee approved the measures described below for strengthening field coordination of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies, especially in the pre-emergency and initial response phases. These measures focus on complex emergencies, which by definition exclude emergencies that fall within the mandate and competence of given United Nations organizations. Coordination responsibilities for emergencies that fall within the overall competence and mandate of a given United Nations agency, while possibly necessitating intervention by various United Nations agencies, remain with the agency concerned.

11. The measures are divided into three sections. The first deals with actions that need to be taken prior to the onset of a complex emergency. The second deals with those which need to be initiated after such an onset, focusing on rapid response measures in the initial emergency response phase. The third deals with the designation/appointment of humanitarian coordinators.

A. Measures to be taken in advance of complex emergencies

1. Disaster management team

12. In developing countries, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, working in consultation with the relevant United Nations agencies is responsible for the early identification of situations which may call for emergency humanitarian assistance, for making the necessary preparations for an effective response and for implementing complex emergency programmes.

13. To this end, a disaster management team 4/ should be established (or reactivated, if this is the case), in all situations of potential emergency. The disaster management team, chaired by the Resident Coordinator, should include all United Nations organizations concerned with humanitarian assistance. The disaster management team should, as appropriate, be expanded in imminent emergency situations seeking the collaboration of other international organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-governmental organizations. The disaster management team should work in close consultation with the host Government, the donor community and regional organizations.

14. In situations of potential emergency, the disaster management team should, as soon as practicable, prepare a contingency action plan designed to ensure a coordinated response, including a strategy for the mobilization of locally available resources. In doing so, the disaster management team will also compile basic data on preparedness measures that exist or can be developed in advance of the emergency. Examples include information on the types of food, clothing, shelter, medical and other supplies which are appropriate for local use and noting those available through local purchase in the country or region; communications and transportation arrangements; ports, airports and airstrips and all other facilities relevant to a rapid and effective response; and the anticipated division of specific responsibility among relevant agencies for emergency response according to established mandates. This information should be reviewed regularly and kept up-to-date, and should be communicated to the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the headquarters of the member agencies.

2. Early warning

15. The Resident Coordinator and disaster management team member agencies in-country have primary responsibility for alerting the Emergency Relief Coordinator (the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) and the headquarters of the member agencies to signs of an impending complex emergency and for recommending appropriate preventive and preparedness actions. It is the responsibility of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and those agencies to ensure that appropriate preparedness actions (such as contingency planning measures, primarily at the in-country level) are undertaken, and that appropriate preventive actions (such as preventive diplomacy initiatives) are promoted.

B. Measures to be taken when complex emergencies arise

16. This section focuses on a number of the coordination actions, as listed below, that must be undertaken in order to ensure an effective and coordinated rapid response to a new complex emergency. This listing is not meant to imply that these actions are to be taken sequentially. Rather, these actions constitute major components of the package of rapid response actions that (with the exception of updating resource requirements) need to be initiated together following the onset of a complex emergency. The issues addressed in this section include:

(a) Initial needs assessments and appeals;

(b) Providing support for needs assessment and appeal production;

(c) Establishing the division of labour and framework of operations;

(d) The use of inter-agency emergency response teams;

(e) Key functions of coordination meetings;

(f) Strengthening staffing for United Nations coordination actions;

(g) Funding sources for supporting field coordination;

(h) Updating resource requirements.

1. Initial needs assessments and appeals 5/

17. When a complex emergency arises, the initial assessment of the complex emergency situation and of relief needs (as well as, it should be noted, the initial response to complex emergencies) will usually be made by the agencies that are on the ground when the complex emergency arises, in accordance with their mandates. The United Nations Resident Coordinator (or the Humanitarian Coordinator, if one has already been designated at this point in time and is in-country) is responsible in-country for ensuring the overall coordination and coherence of such assessments and their timely initiation.

18. These initial assessments will have to rely on rapidly assembled, estimated information. They will aim at identifying the most crucial needs, with a rough indication of their scale, and will suggest how best to utilize existing relief resources. If the needs markedly exceed the resources at hand to address them, it may be necessary to issue immediately a consolidated inter-agency "interim appeal" covering a very limited initial period until the normal consolidated appeal process can be carried out. While in exceptional circumstances, an agency may need to launch its own interim appeal prior to the issuance of a consolidated appeal, efforts will be made to minimize this necessity (for example, by expediting the quick production of the first inter-agency consolidated appeal), and such appeals will be done in consultation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The United Nations agencies are committed to presenting their funding requirements to donors within the context of

consolidated inter-agency appeals to the maximum extent possible. Development of more comprehensive assessments should occur in tandem with action as the situation develops.

19. Such appeals will identify the needs not only for relief items and direct assistance actions, but also for coordination.

2. Providing support for needs assessments and appeal production

20. The initial needs assessment for a new complex emergency will be undertaken primarily by staff already in-country. However, subsequent assessments and the consolidated appeal process may often require additional experienced specialist staff to be provided by the concerned United Nations agencies. Such additional staff will work within the operational framework established by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and the disaster management team. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs will ensure that the staff required for the coordination of such actions are provided, looking first to itself and the relevant United Nations agencies for such persons, but seeking them through other channels if required (see paras. 30-33 below).

21. Logistics, financial and other support for needs assessments and appeal production are to be provided by the concerned humanitarian aid organizations in-country, including the United Nations organizations. 6/ If additional financial resources are required, funding will be sought from the United Nations organizations themselves, including for coordinations aspects, from the Special Programme Resources of UNDP already earmarked for this purpose and from donors. Use of interest from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) will be sought as a last resort, as, under the present regulations for CERF, they must be reimbursed.

3. Division of labour and framework of operations

22. At the very onset of complex emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will consult the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee by the most expeditious means available to reach agreement regarding the appropriate division of labour among them to deal with the crisis.

23. For each complex emergency, a focal point will be identified by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and each concerned organization within its headquarters. This information will be shared immediately among the concerned agencies.

24. From the very onset of a new complex emergency, every effort will be made to reach agreement among all the relevant entities regarding the basic framework within which in-country relief actions will be undertaken, in accordance with their respective mandates and capacities, and with the basic division of responsibilities agreed to with the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The primary responsibility for facilitating this process lies with the Humanitarian Coordinator, working with the disaster management team members and with the other relevant actors.

25. Examples of important components of such a framework are:

(a) Acceptance by all parties to the conflict of the key operating principles that underlie the United Nations humanitarian assistance efforts (for example, neutrality, impartiality, access to those in need, accountability to donors, etc.);

(b) Agreement on the overall geographic and sectoral division of responsibility among the range of humanitarian assistance entities (including both United Nations and non-United Nations entities to the maximum extent possible);

(c) Agreement on which entities will assume responsibility for important categories of persons in need, such as internally displaced persons, and special problem areas such as de-mining;

(d) Clarification from the responsible authorities (for example, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations) of how security-related responsibilities are to be handled and how relevant procedures will be implemented (for example, procedures for authorizing staff to enter less secure areas, convoy security procedures, and procedures for maintaining radio contact, liaison with the designated official for security, etc.) and ensuring that this is communicated to the concerned agencies in the field.

26. Every effort will continue to be made to ensure the clear delineation of coordination functions from those to be carried out directly by the operational United Nations agencies themselves. Coordination is meant to provide value added to enhance the actions of the United Nations operational agencies and to avoid any extra bureaucratic layers.

4. Inter-agency emergency response teams

27. For most complex emergencies, the United Nations emergency response will be carried out by staff already in-country, supplemented as needed by additional staff provided by agency headquarters, within the disaster management team framework. However, in exceptional circumstances, where there is little or no United Nations field presence to build on, the United Nations may deploy an inter-agency emergency response team.

28. In certain civil conflict situations, work must be carried out at considerable risk. This may necessitate keeping the number of staff at risk small and ensuring for each staff member that the work that he or she can accomplish outweighs the risks involved. In such cases, it may be appropriate to utilize a small inter-agency team, with staff of different agencies rotating in and out of the team. Each member of the team may therefore act not only on behalf of his or her agency, but also on behalf of the team as a whole, and even on behalf of another agency, as required. An example of such an approach is the advance humanitarian team that was sent into Rwanda in the early days of the current Rwanda emergency, a model that will be evaluated for lessons learned.

5. Coordination meetings

29. Meetings of the disaster management team in the field, and among the agencies and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at Headquarters (which may take the form of task forces for specific emergencies) to respond to the complex emergency will be action-oriented. They will aim primarily at assessing progress in satisfying the victims' needs and in deciding on solutions to problems, such as which agency will do what to solve major shortfalls in supplies or transport or major bottlenecks in deliveries. In-country, the Humanitarian Coordinator should use these meetings in part to establish the matrix of needs and organizational activities, which will be refined as additional information and experience dictate. The matrix will aid planning for future interventions and will help ensure that all needs are met by sector and region. The disaster management team should seek the collaboration and participation of other international organizations, ICRC, IFRC, IOM and non-governmental organizations in such meetings. The coordination and consultation meetings at the Headquarters level will call for staff representation at the senior technical level.

6. Strengthening staffing for United Nations coordination actions

30. In major complex emergencies there is a need for staff to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator in performing his/her coordination functions, including in support of the disaster management team. Staffing for such positions will first be sought in-country among the relevant United Nations assistance agencies. For posts which cannot be filled quickly in this fashion, the United Nations agencies will be requested to provide qualified staff for quick deployment from other locations. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs and those agencies will work together to further clarify the terms under which such persons could serve in coordination functions, and to determine how best to identify, train and deploy such persons as rapidly as possible when needed.

31. Additional coordination support staff, as needed, will be sought through the expanded use of a variety of mechanisms. Examples include: seeking quick secondment of experienced staff from non-governmental organizations; use of standby staffing mechanisms established with Governments; increased use of United Nations Volunteers; and expanded use of experienced consultants (including those listed on the Department of Humanitarian Affairs roster of such consultants). However, it is agreed that such mechanisms should be used to provide staff to build on the core of staff provided by the United Nations agencies themselves, and not as a substitute for those core staff.

32. United Nations agencies will, to the extent possible, arrange postings for staff experienced in responding to complex emergencies to developing countries where such emergencies may be anticipated.

33. The relevant United Nations agencies will ensure that an adequate number of their staff are trained in emergency response (including in recognizing and managing high stress and its effects) through their own training programmes, the Disaster Management Training Programme or in other ways. Further, Headquarters staff working on humanitarian affairs will, whenever possible, be given postings

in the field to acquire needed experience, and field staff with such experience will in turn be rotated to relevant postings at Headquarters. Particular training in coordination and team skills will be needed and should be provided.

7. Funding sources for supporting field coordination

34. Four sources of funds are available for supporting rapid response field coordination actions at the onset of a complex emergency:

(a) UNDP special programme resources. UNDP Resident Representatives serving jointly as the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator can request up to $50,000 for field coordination actions (and/or certain other specific assistance actions) from category A-2 of UNDP's Special Programme Resources Fund. They may also request up to $100,000 from category A-4 for field level coordination activities in complex emergencies that include internal displacement, refugee or returnee components;

(b) Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). Based upon availability, CERF can presently provide initial funding (which must be reimbursed) to support field coordination from interest earned on its capital. In each case, the Humanitarian Coordinator must contact the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to determine the availability of CERF funds. The members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee ask that this mechanism be continued, but urge that strong consideration be given to expanding the level of funds available for coordination purposes via CERF;

(c) Agency emergency funding resources. In those circumstances where an agency has been asked to serve as lead agency, it might use its own emergency funds to ensure that its field coordination capacity is adequate to meet the demands of its coordinating role;

(d) Consolidated inter-agency appeals. Consolidated inter-agency appeals, particularly initial appeals for immediate start-up operations, are also a means of mobilizing resources for supporting field coordination.

35. Unfortunately, the total level of funds available for quick response coordination actions via these four mechanisms continues to be insufficient to cover the needs. The United Nations humanitarian assistance agencies are not able to significantly reduce this shortfall, as their continued funding shortages make it very difficult to reallocate donor funding away from the purposes for which it was originally requested in order to fund inter-agency coordination efforts. Thus, the United Nations agencies ask the donor community to provide the level of funds required, both through increased standby funds for quick-response coordination actions as well as through quicker and more generous responses to the coordination components of inter-agency consolidated appeals for specific relief operations.

8. Updating resource requirements

36. The initial inter-agency consolidated appeal for a new complex emergency will be updated or replaced by a new appeal, through a joint, inter-agency process when major changes in needs and resource requirements make this necessary. If individual agencies need to modify their funding requests in the period between such consolidated inter-agency appeals, this will be done in close consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinator in-country and with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at Headquarters. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for providing the donors and the larger concerned humanitarian community with updated information concerning the consolidated resource requests of the United Nations agencies for specific major relief operations and the outstanding shortfalls against those requests. These actions are complementary to the resource mobilization and donor reporting activities of the individual United Nations agencies. The United Nations agencies will continue to provide the Department of Humanitarian Affairs with regular, monthly updates of this information, in agreed formats, in order to facilitate this process.

C. Designation/appointment of the Humanitarian Coordinator

37. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed that one of the keys to effective cooperation lies in the system having the right leadership and support capacity for coordination at the field level, where policy is implemented, where day-to-day operations are planned, coordinated and carried out, and where information is gathered, analysed and followed up. The structure and arrangements for such coordination have been evolving slowly on the basis of experience gained and the mandates and capacities of different partners.

38. The United Nations system has many dedicated and experienced personnel working in the field on development issues. In the case of complex emergencies, recent experience has demonstrated that, first and foremost, the United Nations must also have the most qualified person to provide leadership for coordination of humanitarian assistance on a full-time basis. The individual entrusted with such responsibility should possess the necessary experience and training and must enjoy the confidence and support of operational agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other parties involved. The Humanitarian Coordinator must also have the necessary support in the field to discharge fully his/her responsibilities. He/she must work closely with and be able to draw upon the support of operational agencies, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations. It is, therefore, the intention of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to consult fully, on behalf of the Secretary-General, with the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in appointing coordinators for humanitarian assistance for all complex emergencies.

39. The United Nations Resident coordinator and the in-country disaster management team have been and should continue to be the first line of response to disasters and emergencies. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182, the Resident Coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level. In this connection, measures to strengthen the capacity of the Resident Coordinator

system to enable it to play this role are important. This shall be done through expanding the cadre of people with the necessary training and experience. Further efforts to strengthen the emergency coordination capacity in the office of the Resident Coordinator shall also be undertaken. The Administrator of UNDP has taken important initiatives to broaden the Resident Coordinator system by inviting members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and relevant members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to propose candidates who could serve as Resident Coordinators. The active participation of these organizations in contributing to the pool is important. These initiatives have been welcomed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

40. Upon the occurrence of a complex emergency, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, on behalf of the Secretary-General, will undertake immediate consultations with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to decide upon the designation of the Humanitarian Coordinator, taking into consideration the following:

(a) Should the Resident Coordinator in place have the right profile to serve as Humanitarian Coordinator, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, following consultations, will confirm his/her designation;

(b) Should the Resident Coordinator not have the necessary humanitarian profile, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will enter into consultations immediately to identify a replacement. The candidate would come from a roster of experienced humanitarian managers established in consultation with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In situations where the Emergency Relief Coordinator, together with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, find it necessary to appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator outside the Resident Coordinator system, he/she in principle could also be designated as the Resident Coordinator;

(c) In situations where there is no Resident Coordinator in place, or where a Resident Coordinator will not be able to carry out that function, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will, following consultation, appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator, also utilizing the roster mechanism;

(d) In instances where one operational agency of the system is providing the overwhelming majority of humanitarian assistance (as is the case with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Tajikistan), the Emergency Relief Coordinator would consider designating that agency's representative as Humanitarian Coordinator, acting under the authority of and reporting to the Emergency Relief Coordinator;

(e) In addition, for certain situations where there is a need to designate zone/area coordinators under the overall coordination arrangement, the Emergency Relief Coordinator would consider assigning such functions to the representative of the main operational agency carrying out responsibilities in those areas.

41. Through these arrangements, every effort will be made to ensure that there is no delay in the appointment of the Humanitarian Coordinator; that coordination structures in the field are as clear as possible; that excessive layering in the chain of command is avoided; and that the Resident Coordinator

system is respected, supported and, indeed, strengthened. Efforts will be made to ensure that the Humanitarian Coordinator is provided the necessary support in terms of staff and other resources.

42. In this connection, consistent with the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly resolution 48/57, operational organizations will continue to support coordination both at Headquarters and in the field, including through secondment of staff. This has helped to develop greater collegiality and team spirit. Above all, it has promoted better appreciation of agency positions and facilitated coherent programmes. Continued and systematic support from members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is vital for the success of effective coordination.

Recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

43. The IASC endorsed the aforementioned procedures regarding the designation/appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators. It also agreed that the procedures envisaged, including the early pronouncement of a complex emergency and the consultations on the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators, should be kept transparent and be implemented quickly.

III. THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY REVOLVING FUND

44. The information and conclusions provided in this section were considered and approved by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

45. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 as a cash-flow mechanism to ensure the rapid and coordinated response of the organizations of the United Nations system to humanitarian emergencies.

A. Functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund

1. Regulations and procedures governing the operations of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund

46. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the regulations governing the operation of CERF, as embodied in document ST/SGB/251, the organization concerned submits a request for advance against CERF to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, enclosing the project document to which the advance relates.

47. The Emergency Relief Coordinator reviews the request and authorizes the advance. The Coordinator determines the amount to be advanced from CERF in each situation.

48. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Head of the operational organization sign a letter of understanding, which defines the purpose of the programme for which the advance is made, specifies the amount of funds to be

made available, provides that the advance shall be paid as a first charge on contributions received, indicates a target date for repayment and specifies the financial reporting to be made in respect of the advance. The Coordinator transmits the letter of understanding to the United Nations Controller, who effects the transfer of monies to the organization or entity (see annex I for a model letter of understanding).

49. In exceptional circumstances involving particularly urgent cases, the Coordinator may authorize extraordinary advances immediately, on the condition that the appropriate letter of understanding is completed within 30 days.

50. There were some suggestions at the beginning of the operation of CERF that the regulations were not conducive to quick action and were not in conformity with the financial regulations of operational organizations. In the case of UNHCR, for example, its financial rules for voluntary funds do not allow it to borrow funds in advance of anticipated income. Understanding has been reached that advances from CERF, although reimbursable, are considered and recorded by UNHCR as income rather than as accounts payable until contributions are received. Furthermore, UNHCR provides the Department of Humanitarian Affairs with a written undertaking that UNHCR will reimburse allocations as soon as this proves possible. This arrangement has enabled UNHCR to utilize CERF.

51. Experience has shown that, normally, the requests to CERF by operational agencies are reviewed and approved, and resources are deposited into their accounts within three to five days.

52. Operational organizations have confirmed that regulations and procedures for the utilization of CERF are flexible enough to ensure quick processing of requests and disbursement of funds. The relevant organizations have further confirmed that improvements in the administration of CERF, including prompt response by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to requests, have helped them in speeding up their own responses to emergencies.

53. In accordance with resolution 46/182 and as elaborated in the guidelines on the operation of CERF, reimbursements by operational organizations are to be made in the first instance from the voluntary contributions received in response to consolidated appeals.

54. In exceptional cases, when the emergency situation requires the intensification of the support of agencies, CERF may continue to serve as a source of funding in order to avoid the scaling down of much-needed relief activities. At the request of the organization, the reimbursement period of the advance may be extended by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The most recent extension was granted to UNHCR to extend the repayment date of the advance for Rwanda ($10 million) from August to December 1994.

2. Link to consolidated appeal process

55. A functional link between CERF and inter-agency consolidated appeals is crucial. Operational organizations use resources drawn on CERF for financing programmes/projects to be incorporated in consolidated appeals. Requests for

advances, therefore, are made primarily in anticipation of donors' contributions in response to consolidated appeals.

56. The possibilities of disbursement depend on the donor interest in a specific relief operation. Operational organizations, therefore, have exercised self-restraint in seeking the use of CERF, as in many instances they are not confident that the resources necessary for repayment will be provided by donors in response to consolidated appeals. This applied in particular to "silent" or "unpopular" emergencies. In this context, the policy of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), for instance, is to utilize CERF only when there is a firm commitment of funds from a donor.

3. Usefulness of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund

57. Operational organizations draw on CERF when pressing demands of the initial phase of an emergency require prompt action. In most instances, they have to turn to CERF as their own emergency funds are either limited, inadequate or depleted. In a significant number of cases, CERF was the predominant source of funding of the initial phase of a relief operation.

58. Operational organizations have noted the particular usefulness of CERF in funding the initial emergency requirements for their relief operations, particularly in deploying relief supplies, as well as support and management of such operations.

4. Disbursement of funds

59. To date, operational organizations have used CERF on 33 occasions, drawing some $103 million, of which $76 million have been reimbursed. Given the rapid increase in the number, magnitude and scope of emergencies, operational agencies have recently intensified the utilization of CERF. In the last 9 months of 1994, 13 requests for advances totalling $33.7 million have been made, compared to 13 requests in the 12 months of 1993 and 7 in the last 4 months of 1992 (see annex II for the status of utilization of the Fund).

5. Repayment of advances

60. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has explored carefully a number of options in an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of CERF, particularly for its reimbursement while preserving its revolving nature.

61. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, 2/ the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had made efforts to introduce a shorter reimbursement period (3 months instead of 6 or 12 months). However, those efforts have not been successful because of a combination of factors. Normally, it takes approximately one month to complete comprehensive needs assessments and to prepare a consolidated appeal. Donors subsequently require on average three to five months, in accordance with their own financial and other regulations, to

respond, make pledges and actually provide contributions to operational agencies.

62. In some cases, contributions from donors in response to consolidated appeals are in kind or earmarked for specific purposes. In a number of instances, agencies are obliged to pursue consultations with donors in order to obtain their consent to absorb the expenditure supported by the advances from CERF by allowing operational agencies to repay the advances as a first charge to the donor contributions received against the consolidated appeal.

63. Experience has shown that the period of repayment of advances may be longer in cases of what may be called as "silent" or "unpopular" emergencies. Additional efforts, therefore, are often required to mobilize donor support commensurate with the urgent needs of affected populations.

64. Attempts to introduce partial reimbursement procedures, useful as they are, have not led to a significant improvement of the situation.

B. Level of resources

65. The level of resources available in CERF, therefore, has continued to be inadequate. In some instances, it went down to a low level which would not have allowed the request for a single advance to be met, since such requests have averaged $7 to 8 million for a major humanitarian crisis.

66. Given the consistently low level of the current account, unless CERF is enlarged, it will not be able to play fully the role for which is was envisaged.

67. Operational organizations have called for enlarging CERF. UNHCR believes that an increase in the limit of CERF would further its usefulness to UNHCR, but that it should be negotiated so as not to jeopardize direct donor funding of agency requirements. It is also of the view that donors should be sensitized to the need to fund agencies adequately to allow for more prompt reimbursement of CERF. UNICEF expressed concern that a very low level in the CERF reserve would affect the capacities of the operational organizations to respond to ongoing as well as possible future emergencies. It also called for the reinforcement of the CERF mechanisms in tandem with its own emergency fund. WFP emphasized that it would, of course, appreciate it if CERF were much larger than its present ceiling of $50 million. WHO reported that it would welcome an increase in CERF resources, since responses to complex emergencies require large outlays of funds at the very outset. IOM said that it would endorse a sizable increase in the standard amount in CERF.

C. Emergency funds of operational agencies

68. Operational agencies have their own emergency funds. Together with CERF they constitute a pool of resources which is utilized by the United Nations to provide funding to meet urgent requirements of humanitarian crises.

69. The Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) of UNICEF was first established in 1971 with a ceiling of $1 million annually. This ceiling was raised subsequently, and most recently from $7 million to $15 million in early 1994. EPF is mainly utilized to fund emergency relief activities in countries for which no consolidated appeal has been launched. In some cases, EPF is utilized to finance urgent moderate-size activities in non-complex emergencies. In addition, UNICEF draws on EPF in order to support the initial actions of the consolidated inter-agency appeals in complex emergency countries with poor donor response as well as in some instances to fulfil repayment obligations to CERF when funds received from donors are not sufficient to replenish the incurred expenses.

70. The Emergency Fund of UNHCR was established in 1957, with an initial amount of $500,000, to provide financial assistance to refugees and displaced persons in emergency situations for which there is no provision in the programmes approved by the Executive Committee. Resources of this fund are also utilized to cover such additional administrative expenditure resulting from those emergencies as can not be met from the regular budget, pending action of the Executive Committee or the General Assembly. The Emergency Fund is maintained at no less than $8 million by replenishment from the UNHCR Working Capital and Guarantee Fund and through voluntary contributions. Allocations from the UNHCR Emergency Fund are often made for the same emergencies for which UNHCR draws on CERF in order to have an adequate level of resources. For instance, UNHCR utilized resources from both its Emergency Fund and CERF to finance operations in Tajikistan and Burundi/Rwanda. The High Commissioner may allocate from the Emergency Fund up to $25 million annually, provided that the amount made available for one single emergency does not exceed $8 million in any one year.

71. WFP manages an International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) for its relief operations with a minimum annual target of 500,000 tons of cereal equivalent. In 1991, WFP created the Immediate Response Account (IRA), which has an annual target of $30 million in cash, in order to respond to the initial needs of emergency operations through the local and regional purchase and transport of urgently needed food supplies. At the moment, the account stands at approximately $15 million. WFP may also need to draw on CERF when IRA resources have been depleted or are not sufficient for financing the required emergency food needs.

72. For the 1994-1995 biennium, WHO has an Emergency Fund of $1 million from which to draw to meet start-up and other urgent requirements occurring at the onset of sudden emergencies. The fund is divided into a $500,000 replenishable component and a $500,000 allocation.

73. Since August 1993, IOM has maintained an internal Emergency Preparedness Account (EPA) to act as an immediately accessible source of start-up funding on emergency operations. Extremely modest in size ($280,000), it is adequate only to finance starting missions and unable to cover operational costs in emergencies of appreciable breadth.

D. Conclusions

74. The usefulness of CERF is now fully recognized. Operational agencies utilize it more intensively and have emphasized its considerable value in enhancing their capacity to address promptly the urgent requirements of the initial stages of emergencies.

75. Both operational agencies and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs are of the view that the financial regulations and procedures of CERF are simple, and after the necessary adjustments made on the basis of its utilization in the first months of operation, have become adequately flexible for rapid response.

76. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in cooperation with operational organizations, has exhausted its options for maintaining adequate resources in CERF through various means, including the introduction of a shorter reimbursement period and partial reimbursement procedures. These efforts have not increased the overall level of resources of CERF to meet the increasing demands of new emergencies.

77. Experience to date has demonstrated that an average level of resources utilized for a major humanitarian crisis is around $7.5 million. A minimum level of $15 million, therefore, should be maintained in the CERF account in order to ensure that the Fund has enough reserve to meet at any time the urgent requirements of two new major humanitarian crises.

78. CERF and individual emergency funds of operational organizations are complementary. While the former is a cash-flow mechanism, the latter are usually funding resources. In many cases, their resources are utilized for different purposes. In other instances, operational agencies have to draw both on their own funds and CERF in order to reach the resource level necessary to allow timely and effective action at the outset of an emergency. Given the growing number of humanitarian crises, operational agencies do not have sufficient resources available in their emergency funds and will increasingly need to draw on CERF to ensure rapid response.

79. It is obvious that the problem CERF is facing is neither technical nor procedural. It is a problem of inadequate resources. This problem can only be addressed either by quicker, earmarked donor contributions in response to consolidated appeals or by an increase in the size of CERF. Past experience has led us not to be optimistic about quicker donor contributions. An increase in the size of CERF is, therefore, strongly recommended. Such an increase would further allow the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and relief agencies sufficient time to improve the quality of needs assessments and the consolidated appeals.

80. Operational organizations strongly support this approach and have, on many occasions in the past, called for substantial increase in the size of CERF. Furthermore, a suggestion was also advanced by one operational organization that the possibility of using CERF to fully fund some of the less popular emergencies could be explored. For that purpose, a separate, non-revolving account might be established within CERF.

81. It is clear that if and when a decision is made to increase the size of CERF, additional consultations among all parties concerned will be required. In this context, concerted efforts will have to be made to broaden the donor base and involve new partners who are in a position to contribute to the enlargement of CERF.

IV. FUNDING RAPID COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS IN THE FIELD

82. In its resolution 48/57, the General Assembly decided to "authorize, in exceptional circumstances, on a time-bound basis and while preserving the revolving nature of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and relevant operational agencies, under the leadership of the Coordinator, to draw from the interest earned by the Revolving Fund to enhance rapid response coordination where insufficient capacity exists at the field level". This temporary arrangement was established pending a final decision to be made on the basis of the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as on the experience gained.

83. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of resolution 48/57, the Emergency Relief Coordinator authorized the disbursement of $200,000 to enhance rapid response coordination capacity for the emergency operation in Rwanda by establishing the United Nations Rwanda Emergency Office (UNREO).

84. The funds were utilized primarily to set up quickly and operate the UNREO main office at Nairobi, and for the logistics support needed for the United Nations advance humanitarian team in Rwanda. The UNREO Nairobi Office required immediate financial support for office space, computers, communications and local staff costs, among other things. It quickly served not only as the centre for United Nations coordination efforts, but also for liaison with donors, non-governmental organizations and other entities, through information exchange meetings, which were initially held daily at Nairobi.

85. The advance humanitarian team began operations in Kigali on 23 April 1994, even as the war continued in Kigali and the surrounding areas, and following the evacuation of virtually all international humanitarian agencies except ICRC. The Team was composed of staff seconded from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP. Given the need to minimize the number of staff at risk and to ensure that for each staff member the work that he could accomplish outweighed the risks involved, it was decided to utilize a small inter-agency team, with staff of different agencies participating on a rotating basis. Each member of the team, therefore, acted not only on behalf of his agency, but also on behalf of the Team as a whole, and even on behalf of another agency, as required. Under these circumstances, the logistics support required to render the Team virtually self-sufficient, such as specialized personal support kits, was essential to its effective operations.

Recommendation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

86. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommended that the arrangement for financing rapid response coordination from the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund should be continued.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/48/3/Rev.1), chap. III, paras. 18-20 of the agreed conclusions.

2/ A/49/177-E/1994/80.

3/ See E/1994/SR.30.

4/ The role of such disaster management teams presently encompass all aspects of emergency management, involving pre-disaster actions (for example, disaster mitigation and preparedness) as well as those occurring after the onset of disasters.

5/ The sections on needs assessments and appeals summarize many of the relevant conclusions of the Task Force on the Consolidated Appeal Process of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, concentrating on the commitments of the United Nations agencies to facilitating and supporting these processes.

6/ "Concerned humanitarian aid organization" is intended here to be consistent with the term "concerned organization", as used in paragraph 31 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, which refers to the United Nations system, and, where appropriate, national relief organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, intergovernmental organizations, indigenous and international non-governmental organizations and bilateral relief organizations.

ANNEX I

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

Model letter of understanding

1. Name of operational organization:

2. Purpose and objectives of emergency programme/project:

3. Amount and currency of advance from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF):

4. Total cost of programme/project:

5. Time-frame for implementation of programme/project:

6. Target date for repayment of advance:

7. Conditions for repayment of advance:

(a) The advance shall be repaid as a first charge on contributions received by the operational organization in respect of the programme/project, taking into account the provisions of paragraph 14 of ST/SGB/251. Reimbursement shall be implemented, by bank transfer, to United Nations Central Emergency Revolving Fund Account, No. 015-003752, Chemical Bank, United Nations Branch, New York, New York 10017.

(b) A financial status report will be provided to the Emergency Relief Coordinator by the operational organization every six months in respect of the level of expenditure and receipt of contributions and at the time of reimbursement.

8. Should sufficient contributions not be received by the operational organization within a period of one year, the provisions outlined in paragraph 16 of ST/SGB/251 will apply.

9. In addition to the terms of this letter of understanding, the provisions contained in ST/SGB/251 on the establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund will apply to this advance from the Fund.

Peter Hansen
Under-Secretary-General
for Humanitarian Affairs

Date: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX II

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

Consolidated advances and reimbursements as at 10 October 1994

(United States dollars)

Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNICEF	Kenya	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	24 Aug 1992	31 Dec 1992 and 22 Oct 1992
UNICEF	Somalia	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Aug 1992	22 Dec 1992
UNCHS	Somalia	500 000	459 472	40 528	10 Sep 1992	29 Jan 1993
FAO	Somalia	1 600 000	1 600 000	0	30 Sep 1992	24 June 1993
WHO	Somalia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	26 Oct 1992	29 Mar 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	11 Nov 1992	15 Apr 1993
UNHCR	Afghanistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	24 Nov 1992	6 Jan 1993
UNICEF	Mozambique	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 Jan 1993	2 Feb 1994 and 1 Aug 1994
WFP	Tajikistan	4 500 000	2 036 121	2 463 879	25 Mar 1993	3 May 1994 and 10 June 1994
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	2 500 000	0	26 Mar 1993	5 May 1994
UNHCR	Georgia	2 000 000	2 000 000	0	22 Apr 1993	16 Sep 1993
UNICEF	Iraq	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	14 Jun 1993	21 Oct 1993
UNHCR	Tajikistan	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	18 Jun 1993	29 Dec 1993 and May 1994
WFP	Iraq	4 000 000	4 023 200	0	21 Jun 1993	3 May 1994 and 9 Aug 1994
UNICEF	Haiti	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	23 July 1993	25 Apr 1994 and 1 Aug 1994
WFP	Lebanon	560 000	560 000	0	3 Sep 1993	3 Jan 1994 (FAO)
UNCHS	Lebanon	5 000 000	1 693 276	3 306 724	9 Sep 1993	21 Mar 1994 and 17 June 1994

Operational organization	Project	Amount advanced	Amount reimbursed	Amount outstanding	Date of advance	Date of reimbursement
UNICEF	Iraq	7 000 000	7 000 000	0	27 Oct 1993	1 Feb 1994
UNHCR	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	19 Nov 1993	1 June 1994
WFP	Burundi	5 000 000	5 000 000	0	22 Dec 1993	3 May 1994
UNICEF	Angola	1 500 000	1 500 000	0	6 Jan 1994	19 May 1994
IOM	Zaire	1 000 000	649 847	350 153	6 Jan 1994	8 July 1994
UNICEF	Sudan	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	17 Feb 1994	20 June 1994
FAO	Sudan	200 000	200 000	0	23 Feb 1994	16 May 1994
UNICEF	Yugoslavia	1 000 000	1 000 000	0	16 Mar 1994	31 Aug 1994
UNDP	Kenya	500 000	0	500 000	18 Mar 1994	
WHO	Yugoslavia	2 500 000	0	2 500 000	29 Mar 1994	
UNICEF	Somalia	4 870 000	2 770 000	2 100 000	28 Apr 1994	22 July 1994
UNREO	Rwanda	200 000	200 000	0	28 Apr 1994	8 Sep 1994
UNHCR	Tajikistan	3 000 000	0	3 000 000	20 May 1994	
UNHCR	Rwanda	10 000 000	5 000 000	5 000 000	1 June 1994	29 Sep 1994
UNICEF	Rwanda	3 000 000	0	3 000 000	21 July 1994	
WFP	Rwanda	5 000 000	0	5 000 000	22 July 1994	
		103 430 000	76 191 916	27 261 284		

Status of utilization of the Fund

Contributions received:	$48 885 992
Less: Advances	(103 430 000)
Add: Reimbursements	76 191 916
Add: Interest earned (as of 31 July 1994)	1 439 488
Fund balance as at 10 October 1994	$23 087 396

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ANNEX III

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

Status of contributions as at 10 October 1994

(United States dollars)

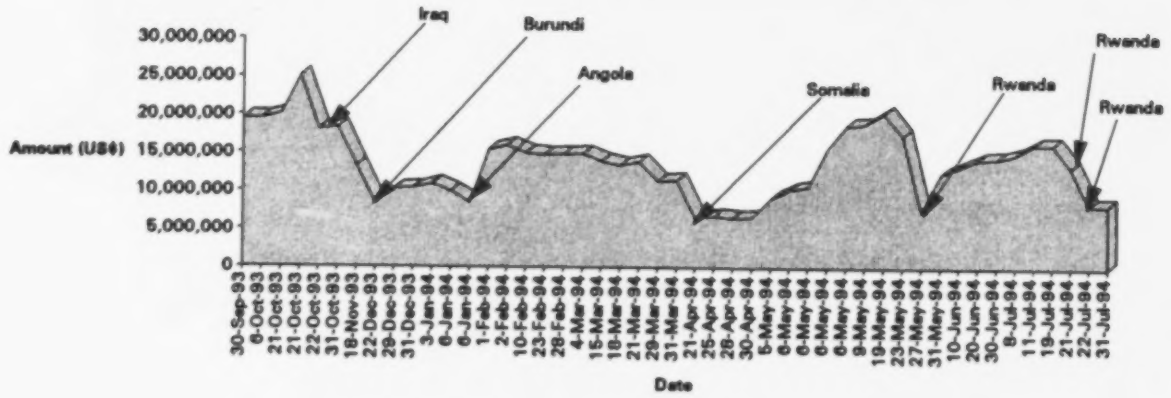
	Pledges	Collections	Date paid
Australia	800 000	743 600	27 July 1992
Austria	500 000	500 000	30 Mar 1992
Belgium	330 000	327 327	17 Sep 1992
Canada	2 300 000	2 195 321	16 and 22 June 1992
Colombia	10 000	10 000	4 Feb 1993
Denmark	2 000 000	1 999 985	31 Aug 1992
Finland	1 500 000	1 533 804	18 June 1992
France	5 600 000	934 579 4 545 455	16 Nov 1992 8 and 27 Jan 1993
Germany	5 000 000	5 000 000	30 June 1992
Holy See	50 000	50 000	22 May 1992
Iceland	10 000	10 000	6 July 1992
Ireland	100 000	100 000	18 June 1992
Italy	5 000 000	4 284 184	10 Dec 1992
Japan	5 000 000	5 000 000	27 July 1992
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	5 000	5 000	6 Oct 1993
Liechtenstein	7 000	6 641	10 Apr 92
Luxembourg	100 000	100 000	13 Aug 92
Malaysia	20 000	20 000	15 June 1993
Mauritius	10 000	10 000	1 July 1992
Monaco	20 000	20 000	19 July 1994
Netherlands	3 000 000	3 083 590	12 June 1992
New Zealand	140 000	136 825	23 Mar 1992
Norway	1 850 000	1 849 970	5 May and 10 June 1992
Republic of Korea	50 000	50 000	11 June 1992

	Pledges	Collections	Date paid
Spain	750 000	671 544	7 June 1993
		88 453	4 Mar 1994
Sweden	2 750 000	2 408 744	25 Nov 1992
Switzerland	2 000 000	999 985	25 Aug 1992 and
		999 985	13 Jan 1993
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	5 000 000	5 000 000	24 Apr 1992
United States of America	6 200 000	2 500 000	15 Apr 1992
		3 700 000	23 Feb and 19 July 1993
Non-governmental organizations	1 000	1 000	17 June 1992
Total contributions	50 103 000	48 885 992	

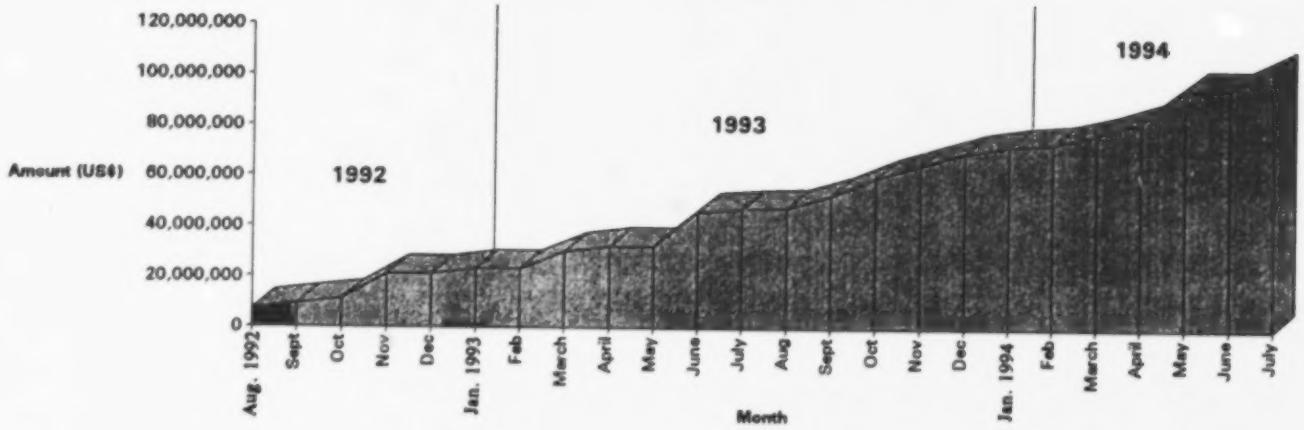
ANNEX IV

Analysis of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund

A. Balance of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund



B. Advances from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund - cumulative totals



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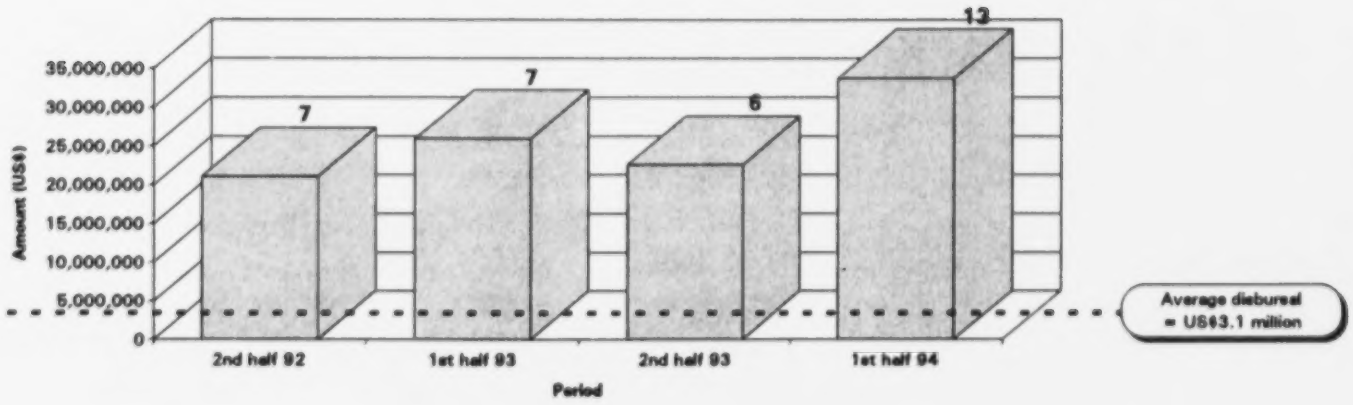
C. Advances from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund

(showing number of disbursals)



D. Proportional use of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund by agencies